

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS REGARDING SOME SPECIES OF BIRDS NOTICED BY MR. W. T. BLANFORD, IN HIS "*Ornithological notes from Southern, Western and Central India*,"— by ALLAN O. HUME, Esq., C. B., Commissioner of Customs, Agra.

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The following remarks on Mr. W. T. Blanford's "*Ornithological notes, &c.*" which appeared in Part II of the Journal of the Asiatic Society for 1869, are submitted as an additional information regarding several species which Mr. Blanford has noticed in his paper. Some of the data had been collected many years previous, but they had not as yet been placed on record.

I would premise in regard to the 3 species which, Mr. Blanford particularly notices in his introductory notes, viz. *Salpornis spilonotus*, *Hirundo fluviicola* and *Cyornis Tickellia*, that no one of these is by any means so rare as he supposes.

As regards *Salpornis spilonotus* my collection contains specimens from Oudh, (collected by Mr. R. M. Adam, and another of my coadjutors, Mr. R. Thompson, I believe), from the north of the Saharunpúr district or the Dhún, (collected by Mr. G. F. R. Marshall), from the foot of Mt. Abú, (collected by Dr. King), and from the neighbourhood of Murrie, (in a purchased collection).

Hirundo (Lagenoplastes) fluviicola, is the commonest of our swallows in Upper India, from the Tonse river, near Mirzapúr to the Sutledge near Ferózpúr; it abounds wherever there is water, cliffs or ruined buildings, against which it can plaster its huge mud, honey-comb-like, congery of nests. In Ajmere, at Ahmedabad in Guzerat, in Saugor in the Central Provinces, I have noticed numerous colonies, and I have been familiar with this bird, its nest and eggs for the last 20 years, although I did not know its correct name, until shortly before the first volume of Dr. Jerdon's work appeared.

As for *Cyornis Tickellia*, I have received more specimens of it than of either *rubeculoides* or *Jerdoni*, all, however, from the Jhansee, Saugor and Hoshungabad divisions, and fully two years ago Mr. E. C. Mum sent me the nests and eggs of this species with the female shot by himself off the nest.

Turning now to some of the species separately enumerated, I note :—

18. *Tinnunculus Cenchris*.—This species may be at once discriminated from *T. alaudarius* by the colour of its claws. These are black in the last named species, white or yellowish white in *T. Cenchris*.

50. *Circus cyaneus*.—It is impossible ever to confound this species with *C. Swainsoni*, the pure white upper tail coverts, at all ages and in both sexes, suffice, as Col. Sykes long ago pointed out, to separate the European Hen Harrier from the pale-chested Harrier. I have specimens from near Indore and have seen others from near Jhansee.

53. *Circus melanoleucus*.—I agree with Mr. Blanford that this bird never occurs, except perhaps as an isolated straggler, in Northern or Western India; my specimens, and all in fact that I have yet seen, were from lower Bengal, Assam and Tippera.

56, bis.—*Milvus melanotes* ? I have or have had several specimens, young and old, of the large kite referred to by Mr. Blanford; males with the wing 20 inches and upwards and females with the wing up to 22. The young, so far as plumage goes, correspond exactly with Gustav Radde's figure of the young of *Milvus melanotes*, and hitherto I have been inclined to identify our large Indian race with this species. In Part II of my "Rough Notes," I hope to discuss this question more fully.

104. *Dendrochelidon coronata*, though locally distributed is by no means a rare or uncommon bird. It breeds freely, to my certain knowledge, in the sub-Himalayan track, below Kumaon and Gurhwal, in parts of the Mirzapur district, in the Mandla district of the Central Provinces, (from which locality Mr. R. Thompson sent me an exquisite little nest), in the Nilgherries (whence also I have received its egg) and Ceylon, and many other localities too numerous to record here.

95. *Acanthylis sylvatica*. I also have never obtained specimens of this bird from the Central Provinces. I have them, however, from Conoor (Nilgherries) and Gurhwal, in which latter locality they are common.

631. *Zosterops palpebrosus*.—This species is anything but rare

in Saugor, Central Provinces. I have, I find, five nests, and at least a dozen eggs, from that locality.

85. *Hirundo erythropygia*.—It has not yet I believe been pointed out, that while this species of mosque swallow belongs as a resident to the plains of India, *H. daurica*, which is the resident species of the Himalayas,—breeding freely for instance about the bungalows of Simla,—also during the cold season visits the plains reaching at least as far south as Agra. I quite agree with Gould in separating *Cecropis rufula*, *daurica* and *erythropygia*, although occasionally somewhat intermediate forms are met with in Syria and Northern India.

86. *H. fluvicola*.—It is not at all unusual for this species to breed against high cliffs. To give one single instance, (and I could give fifty) visiting the river Chambal where the Etawah and Gwalior road crosses it, and following its course downwards to its junction, at Bhurrey, with the Jumná, one will meet with at least an hundred colonies of this species, all with their clustered nests plastered against the faces of the high clay cliffs which overhang the river. I take this opportunity of noticing that the differences remarked by Mr. Gould in his Indian specimens are merely due to sex and age. The presence, or absence (more or less entire) of the white marginal spot on the tail feathers is sexual, the white being always strongest in the old males, while the presence of striæ on the head is a sign of immaturity.

90. *Ptionoprogne concolor*.—I cannot (with very large series of each before me) concur in what Mr. Blanford says of the eggs of this species and *L. fluvicola* and *H. ruficeps*. The eggs of *concolor* are certainly not more spotted than those of *ruficeps*. So far as the character, extent and intensity of markings go, they are intermediate between those of *fluvicola* and *ruficeps*. The ground color is white, and they are all more or less thickly speckled, spotted &c., though rarely blotched, with different shades of yellowish and reddish brown. Unlike those of *fluvicola*, which are as often pure white as not, these eggs are always pretty thickly marked, but the markings, though better defined and darker than those of *fluvicola*, are neither so bold nor so bright as in *ruficeps*. As in both these species, the markings are always most dense towards the broader

end, where a more or less ill-defined zone, or irregular and partial cap is not uncommon.

Again the nests are not, I should say "precisely similar" to those of the Indian wire-tailed swallow, but are deeper and smaller, coming to a well-defined point below.

91. *Ptionoprogne rupestris*.—I quite agree with Mr. Blanford that this species is not confined to the higher Hills; it is only the other day that I procured a pair at the Taragurh Hill, at Ajmere, a solitary rocky outlier of the Aravallis only some 3000 feet in height, but at the same time the only breeding places that I know of are some 8000 feet high in the Himalayas. Amongst the lower rocky ranges I have hitherto believed them (though in this I may err) to be only winter and spring visitants, retiring in India to colder and more elevated localities to breed in.

293. *Leucocerca leucogaster*.—I have this species from as far north as Mt. Abú, to which locality, I may notice, *Gallus Sonerati* also extends, as well as *Cursorius Gallicus* and *Houbara Macqueeni* from the North West.

310. *Muscicapula superciliaris*, extends during the cold weather all over the plains of India. Mr. Brookes procured a specimen in Etawah I think, and I have one from the same locality, another from near Lucknow and several from Saugor.

325. *Erythrosterina acornaus*.—The only specimen that I have of this species was also a female—and was shot along with an *E. maculata*. I have not gone minutely into the question, but I would suggest that possibly *acornaus* is only the female of *maculata*. Anyhow, all the specimens that I possess of the latter were males.

323. *Erythrosterina parva*.—This is the *only* species in upper India. I am not sure if I have ever seen a true *leucura* from any locality, except perhaps Tippera.—I have several European specimens, and am perfectly certain that the huge series that I possess from all parts of Rájputana, the N. W. and Central Provinces and Oudh, are one and all *parva*.

268. *Volvoivora Sykesi*.—Not very uncommon about Saugor, I got the nest and eggs both of this species and of *Graucalus Macei*, this year for the first time, from this district.

257. *Lanius erythronotus*.—I wonder whether Mr. B l a n f o r d got hold of either *Lanius caniceps* or *tephronotus*. It is curious how often these three species are confounded, yet they are really very distinct, as the subjoined comparative table will show :—

	Frontal band.	General colour of upper parts.	Extent of rufous on upper surface.	Colour of tail feathers.
<i>L. erythronotus</i> , ...	From 0·1" to 0·3" in width.	Somewhat pale ashy grey.	Whole lower back, rump, upper tail coverts and longer scapulars.	Central tail feathers black, or blackish brown, laterals brown, with a grey tint.
<i>L. caniceps</i> ,.....	Ditto.	Ditto.	Rump and upper tail coverts only.	Ditto.
<i>L. tephronotus</i> , ...	Almost entirely wanting.	Somewhat dark ashy brown.	Ditto.	Central tail feathers deep rufous brown, laterals growing paler as they recede from the centre, all rufous brown.

Besides this, *caniceps* has the middle portion of the abdomen right down to the vent white, while in *erythronotus* the lower portion of the abdomen, the feathers above the vent, are bright ferruginous.

460. *Otocompsa fuscicaudata*.—This species extends northwards to Mt. Abú, where I found it very abundant; specimens there obtained are in every respect identical with those from Conoor (Nilgherries). In Oudh and in Bengal, this species is replaced by *Otocompsa emeria*, and east of the bay of Bengal by *O. jocosa*—Mr. B l a n f o r d says, that he has never met with an *Otocompsa* in Central India; I presume he means of the *jocosa* type, with red whiskers, because *O. leucotis* occurs, though rarely both, in Saugor and Hoshungabad.

467. *Iora Zeylanica*.—This species and *typhia* are one and the same species. I have more than 100 specimens from all parts of

India, some from even as far east as Comillah in Tipperah, and there is not the slightest doubt, I believe, that both forms represent different sexes and stages of plumage of the same species. Mr. Blanford might, therefore, well kill a perfectly intermediate specimen.

473. *Oriolus Ceylonensis*.—None of the supposed specimens of this species, from Ahmednugger sent me by Messrs. Fairbank and Bruce were, in my opinion, *Ceylonensis*,—at least if *Ceylonensis* be a good species. The chief distinctions supposed to exist between *melanocephalus* and *Ceylonensis* consist—1st, in the black of the throat coming much further down on the breast of *melanocephalus*, than of *Ceylonensis*; 2nd, in *melanocephalus* having the secondaries and tertiaries broadly tipped yellow, and the outer webs of the latter yellow, while in *Ceylonensis* only the tertiaries are tipped, and this only on the outer webs, with yellow.

Messrs. Fairbank's and Bruce's Ahmednugger specimens, though somewhat intermediate, pertained rather to the *melanocephalus* than the *Ceylonensis* type. As a matter of fact, I have shot good typical examples of both races in the same localities in the Bhabur, below Gurhwal, and in Oudh Terai, and I at present utterly disbelieve in *Ceylonensis* as a distinct species. Perhaps, however, I have never seen a true *Ceylonensis*, my museum unfortunately contains no Ceylon specimen.

353. *Orocates cinclorhynchus*.—Stragglers of this species (and what is more remarkable of *Oreocincla dauma*) occur every cold weather in the plains of the N.W. Provinces and the northern portion of the Central Provinces. When our Avifauna comes to be more closely watched, a vast number of the Himalayan species, now considered to reside exclusively in the Hills, will be found to visit the plains during the cold weather. I killed a fine specimen of *Tichodroma muraria* on the clay cliffs of the river Jumná, at Sheregurh, some 20 miles due north of Jaloun.

354. *Geocichla cyanota*.—Mr. Blanford may be right in considering the olive tint on the back a sign of immaturity, but it is curious, that out of a large series of this species and *citrina*, no single male exhibits this peculiarity, but a large proportion of the females do. This may be accidental.

488. *Saxicola opistholeuca*.—This species will not stand, the points relied on by Blyth, Strickland and Gould are not constant, as the examination of a large series shows.

515. *Acrocephalus brunnescens*. I have specimens from numerous parts of India. The proportions of the primaries vary a good deal, not locally but individually, and the tone of coloration also varies greatly.

645. *Parus cinereus*.—I have specimens from all parts of India,—from Cashmere to Comillah, and from Kotgurh to Conoor. Individuals differ; the species is one and the same; Javanese specimens do seem to be persistently smaller; I have not, however, seen a sufficient number of examples to make sure that this difference is really constant.

604. *Agrodroma sordida*.—As I have pointed out in a paper which will appear in an early number of the Ibis, neither of our Indian birds known as *A. sordida* and *cinnamomea*, can well be identical with Rüppell's birds. It is needless to discuss the matter here, but if I am correct and with Rüppell's careful Latin and German descriptions of both, and his plate of *sordida* before me, I can scarcely be in error; the Indian birds will stand, the supposed *A. cinnamomea* as *A. similis*, Jerdon, and the supposed *A. sordida* as *A. griseo-rufescens*, nobis.

768. *Alauda Malabarica*? Unless I am much mistaken (which I very likely may be) this bird of Mr. Blanford's is the true *Spizalauda Deva*.

The Rev. Mr. Fairbank favoured me with three specimens of a lark killed at Khandalla, which he (or perhaps Mr. Blanford) had named *Alauda Malabarica*. On examination, they proved to have hind claws only 0·4 in length, and the 1st primary 0·6 in length. It was quite clear that these were not true (restricted) *Alauda*. On closer examination there remained no doubt that these were the true *Spizalauda Deva* of Sykes, although the dimensions somewhat exceeded those given by Jerdon. On comparing these with the Upper Indian race which I had hitherto confounded with Sykes's bird, and of which it is not impossible that Jerdon owing to a similar error, gave the dimensions, I found that conspicuous differences existed, rendering the separation of the Upper Indian race as a distinct species necessary.

I proceed to give some dimensions of the Southern and Northern Indian races, premising that to the latter I have given the specific name of *simillima*.

		length,	wing,	1st prim.	tail,	bill at front,	tarsus,	hind toe and claw,
<i>S. Deva</i> , (Southern India.)	♀	6.25	3.60	0.60	2.05	0.53	0.86	0.75
	♂	6.10	3.65	0.62	2.16	0.53	0.81	0.72
	♂	6.00	3.57	0.80	2.00	0.57	0.86	0.75
<i>S. simillima</i> , (Northern India.)	♀	5.20	3.15	0.38	1.75	0.45	0.70	0.64
	♀	5.50	3.26	0.40	1.85	0.43	0.72	0.65
	♀	5.20	3.00	0.42	1.70	0.50	0.70	0.68

The plumage of the two species is of precisely the same character, but the colouring of the Upper Indian bird is paler and less rufous, and this is especially conspicuous in the outer webs of the first long primaries and exterior tail feathers, which are rufous buff in *Deva*, and pale fawn colour or yellowish white in *simillima*, and in the wing lining and rufous margins to the interior webs of the quills. Altogether the bird has a paler and sandier cast, so much so, that the first glance at the birds is sufficient to attract the attention of even a superficial observer to the difference. The crest of the adult Northern bird too is, I think, longer than that of the Southern, some of the feathers of the former measuring fully 0.9" in length. This bird bears the same relation (so far as type of colour goes) to *S. Deva*, than *A. gulgula* does to *A. Malabarica*.

Spizalauda simillima occurs throughout the upper portion of the N. W. Provinces and Cis-Sutledge States of the Panjab, and I have specimens sent me from Jhansee; but what the limits of its range are, I do not yet know, having until recently always confounded it with *S. Deva*.

I may here note that Capt. Mitchell of Madras sent me specimens of *Alauda Malabarica* from Ootacamund labelled *A. gulgula*; accepting his name and noticing the striking difference in appearance between these birds and our northern representative race, I separated the latter, as *A. gulgulensis*, (*vide* my Catalogue), but subsequent careful examination has shown me that the Ootacamund birds are really *A. Malabarica*, while our northern race is the true *A. gulgula* of Franklin.

From this it will appear that Mr. Blanford's bird, having the hind toe claw only 0.4, cannot be identified with *Alauda Mala-*

barica, a restricted *Alauda* with a long hind claw. Of course the bird recorded by him as *Spizalauda Deva* is the *Spizalauda similima*, nobis.

716. *Emberiza Huttoni*.—This bird is common almost throughout Northern, Western and Central India, wherever there are rocky hills. It abounds in the Salt Range, in the Panjab, and throughout the Aravalli range; Taragurh at Ajmere and Mt. Abú, being amongst its most favourite resorts. I have it from near Mirzapúr, from the Siwaliks and from the Saugor Division and Mr. Brookes has shot it in Etawah. Probably like *Emberiza striolata*, which I this year found breeding at Ajmere (see a separate paper on this species, which will appear in an early number of the Ibis) *E. Huttoni* is a permanent resident and not, as has been supposed, a visitant from the Himalayas. This is of course the bird referred to by Sykes as *E. hortulana*.

800. *Pterocles fasciatus*.—It is strange that I have never noticed the crepuscular habits of this bird. I have shot scores of it. One day, Mr. F. R. Blewitt and myself bagged over a dozen within a circle of half a mile at Tirkee in Goorgaon, not many miles from the famous sulphur springs at Soria. Only the other day I shot a pair not far from Kishengurh in Rajpútana in bright daylight, as they came down to drink, and I have seen them at the water's edge in the mornings at least a dozen times. They are very common in Upper India wherever there are low rocky hills with a little scrub jungle at the base, quite as common as *P. exustus* in the sandy open plains. I have shot both these species and *arenarius* in the same morning in the Goorgaon district, but *alchata*, our fourth Indian species very rarely I think crosses the Indus, though it is abundant enough in the cold season at Hot Murdan and other trans-Indus Panjab posts, where it is known to sportsmen as the bronze-winged Sand-grouse.

819 bis. *Francolinus* n. sp.—I do not doubt that the Cutch species is distinct, I propose to name it after my valued friend and contributor, Dr. King, whose paper on the Birds of Goona is noticed more than once by Mr. Blanford. I had intended describing this species in the Ibis, but the only specimen I had, was such a vile rag, that I hesitated to do so, and in a weak moment, sent it to

a brother sportsman in Kattywar, whence it had been received, to show the species of which I wanted specimens. Now, I am sorry to say, I can neither get the original specimen nor better ones out of my friend, and my only hope is, that seeing this notice, he may be conscience-stricken, and do me the favour of returning me my own bird, with a good series of the same species.

P. S.—I take this opportunity of intimating my dissent to the propriety of elevating the Mahableshtar race of *Alcippe poiocephala* to the rank of a distinct species.

To the kindness of Mr. H. R. P. Carter I owe a noble series of the Nilgherry bird, and to the Rev. H. Bruce, two specimens of the supposed *A. Brucei*.

I admit freely that, as a rule, *A. poiocephala* is somewhat smaller than the specimens of *Brucei* which I possess, but some specimens of the former are fully as large. *Brucei*, to judge from the specimens before me, is certainly not darker as a rule, than the majority of *poiocephala*, nor is it less ferruginous, and these three points are, what Mr. Fairbank in the original description which he sent me chiefly relies on.

The fact is the shade of colour varies in individuals. *Brucei* is darker and less ferruginous, or lighter and more ferruginous than some, and absolutely identical in colour with other specimens of *poiocephala* that I possess.

The rounding of the tail, the wideness and firmness of the inner webs (other points insisted on by Mr. Fairbank) varies in individuals, and in these respects also, the specimens sent me of *Brucei* are intermediate between those now before me of the Nilgherry bird.

It may be said that *Alcippe Nipalensis* which I admit as a distinct species, differs only very slightly in plumage from *poiocephala* and this is true, but, the bill, legs and feet (the former conspicuously) of this latter, are invariably larger than those of *Nipalensis*, while they correspond exactly with those of *Brucei*. In the one case (and I speak after comparing numerous specimens), we have a constant and very material structural difference, while in the other there appears to be an absolute structural identity.